

Minutes
Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee
July 25, 2005

Members Present: Russ Brubaker, Chair, Neal Adams, Alan Alabastro, Doug Dunham, Don Harper, Terry Holme, Phillippe Jeoffroy, Peter Lukevich, Joyce Moty, Alec Stephens

Staff Present: Superintendent Ken Bounds, Catherine Anstett, Erin Devoto, Susan Golub,

Committee Business: The July 25 meeting agenda was approved and the minutes from May 23 and June 22 were approved.

Public Comments:

There were no comments from the public.

Public Art Program Presentation: Carolyn Law

Pro Parks Levy projects generate 1% for Art funding. Carolyn Law, an art planner and artist, is responsible for directing how the art funding is spent. Ms. Law developed an Art Plan to guide these decisions. The goal of the Plan is to investigate how artists can enhance parks. At the July 25 Oversight Committee meeting, Ms. Law provided an introduction to the Art Plan; at a subsequent meeting she will provide more specific project information.

The Art Plan creates opportunities for artists to work on a select number of projects. One percent funding is pooled to provide adequate funding to make the projects have an impact on the parks. Parks are selected to meet a cross section of the types of parks including small neighborhood parks, mid sized parks and major parks. Art projects have been planned for the following parks:

- Mineral Springs – completed
- South Lake Union – design completed
- I-5 Open Space – underway
- Westcrest – getting started
- Lincoln Annex – uncertain whether this will happen
- Magnuson – uncertain, may be utility-funded art project
- Dexter Pit – hopeful
- Bergen Place – completed
- Lake City Civic Center – almost completed
- Pratt – underway.

The small Pro Parks Levy art projects will be done by emerging new artists coordinated by a mentoring program to help new artists. In addition, there is a Levy sponsored writing program. Twelve stories were written about people and their impacts on parks; a companion map was created with references to the parks mentioned in the stories.

Committee member Terry Holme asked Ms. Law who made the decisions regarding which parks would have art projects and how the funding would be divided between the parks. Ms. Law responded that she made the decisions after discussions with the Board of Park Commissioners, the Oversight Committee and Parks staff. Her goals in park selection include geographic diversity, and connectivity:

connections among the Pro Parks Levy art projects. Superintendent Bounds noted that Parks has the final say regarding where the art projects will be located.

Committee member Don Harper asked if there was an art opportunity fund. Ms. Law responded that there was not. Committee member Lukevich suggested that if a project is to occur at Magnuson Park, that Ms. Law work with the Magnuson Project Advisory Team. Committee member Moty thanked Ms. Law for her efforts and applauded the approach of focusing the funds on a few key parks rather than spreading it thin through a lot of parks.

Cost Primer: Erin Devoto

Erin Devoto, Director of Parks Planning and Development Division, presented the Oversight Committee with a draft cost primer to explain how projects are budgeted. The direction to produce this document came from the audit review of the Oversight Committee and the Committee's interest in a "frequently asked questions" document. The purpose of the presentation at the July meeting was to get the Committee's feedback on the draft.

When the Levy was originally developed, project budgets were based on costs of previous similar projects and the rate of inflation. This provided a general estimate. The first task of a project manager is to develop a specific budget for the project using Parks Project Estimate Revision Form. The budget is based on historical data and can change as a project progresses; for example, if Design Commission or Landmarks review is required, or the public process expands beyond the standard length. Project budgets are reviewed quarterly and every time there is a change, and they are balanced quarterly.

Washington State Public Works Laws apply to all Levy projects. They limit the City; for example, Parks can only hire a consultant based on experience and interviews – not based on price. The price is negotiated after the consultant is selected.

The Planning and Development Division has a \$7 million operating budget. Of this, \$1 million is from the City's General Fund, the remaining \$6 million is the cost of managing the Levy. Therefore, when the Levy projects are finished, staff and expenses will need to be cut.

Committee member Brubaker noted that the primer did a good job of explaining how budgets get put together and what gets charged to the Levy. He would also like to see more about a specific project; for example, what is the typical amount for CCA, for the public process, for design. He suggested a breakdown of a real or sample project would be helpful.

Committee member Lukevich asked if there were additional options for computing overhead costs and if there were more cost effective ways to do projects, for example sole source construction. Ms. Devoto responded that utilities have a different method for calculating overhead, and also that the State Public Works Laws prohibit us from doing sole source construction. For projects with a budget of \$10 or more, design and construction can be by the same firm, but not for projects less than \$10 million.

Committee member Dunham asked whether budgets for acquisition projects have a different method for calculating costs, and suggested that the primer include information regarding why Parks has to pay for property owned by other City departments.. Ms. Devoto responded that the information

presented in the cost primer applies to development projects only – acquisition projects have a different method of developing budgets.

Regarding overhead costs, Superintendent Bounds suggested that the primer show what the 35% soft costs include.

Committee member Adams suggested including more graphic presentations of information and simplifying the language in order to make the document more understandable for the community. For example, a comparison of private sector and public sector projects would be helpful.

Committee member Alabastro suggested showing a linear time line, including project costs, which could graphically show the steps and costs of building a park.

Committee members Moty and Brubaker noted the importance of transparency with Levy budgets and their hope that the primer can help get support for a future park levy.

Committee member Stephens suggested providing consistent information about elements that are always part of a project. He recommended taking a broad, but understandable view.

Levy Annual Report: Catherine Anstett

Parks Planning and Development staff member Catherine Anstett presented the final version of the Annual Report to the Committee. Ms. Anstett reminded the Committee that preliminary approval was given to the report at the June committee meeting. Ms. Anstett stated that the report will be transmitted to the City Council and is tentatively scheduled for presentation to the Parks Neighborhoods and Education Committee on September 21. Susan Golub will solicit Committee members to attend the City Council meeting as soon as the date is final.